

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 ARA-10 HA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0822

INFO RUTABAAMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 477

AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

USINTERESTS CUBA

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 0804

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, TP, GB

SUBJ: ALLEGED PROPOSED INVASION OF SAO TOME

REF: A) LIBREVILLE 448 (NOTAL), B) LIBREVILLE 0545 (NOTAL), C) LIB 629

(NOTAL), D) ADDIS ABABA 1204 (NOTAL)

1. ON MARCH 31, JEAN-PIERRE CHALLARD, CORRESPONDENT FOR LOCAL DAILY L'UNION AND STRINGER FOR PARIS BASED DEMAN L'AFRIQUE, RELATED FOLLOWING STORY RE ALLEGED PROPOSED INVASION OF SAO TOME (REFTELS) TO AMBASSADOR WHICH WE REPORT FOR WHATEVER IT MAY BE WORTH SINCE WE HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO CONFIRMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES: CHALLARD, HOWEVER, HAS GOOD REPUTATION HERE AS JOURNALIST AND DOES HAVE SOME SAO TOMEAN CONTACTS.

2. SAYING HE WAS "DOING STORY" ON SAO TOME, CHALLARD SAID SOMETIME
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LAST FALL, UNIDENTIFIED EXILE SAO TOMEAN WROTE LETTER TO PERSONS UNKNOWN WHILE IN HAVANA WHICH DETAILED PLOT TO OVERTHROW STP. LETTER WAS INTERCEPTED BY CUBANS WHO APPARENTLY SHARED CONTENTS WITH SAO TOMEANS. RESULT WAS ARREST OF TWO MINISTERS, HEAD OF ARMED FORCES, AND THREE OR FOUR PORTUGUESE, PROBABLY IN NOVEMBER. PORTUGUESE WERE RELEASED ABOUT ONE MONTH LATER APPARENTLY FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE. OTHERS MAY STILL BE LOCKED UP. CHARGED OF "INVASION"

WERE LINKED TO THIS INCIDENT FOR INTERNAL CONSUMPTION, BUT CHALLARD COULD NOT COME UP WITH ANY GOOD REASON WHY, IF STORY WAS TRUE, INVASION STORY WAS DELAYED SO LONG.

3. ACCORDING CHALLARD, STORY WAS RELATED TO PRES. BONGO DURING VISIT BY AMBASSADOR MARIA AMORIM, AMBASSADOR AT LARGE, MARCH 30 BY WAY OF EXPLANATION OF SAO TOME'S CONCERN. AMORIM ALSO REQUESTED RESUMPTION OF AIR GABON FLIGHTS TO SAO TOME.

4. COMMENT: HOW MUCH IF ANY OF CHALLARD'S STORY IS TRUE WE HAVE NO WAY OF KNOWING. IT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT APPEAR LOCALLY IN PRINT BUT MIGHT SURFACE SOMEWHERE OUTSIDE OF GABON. FACT THAT SAO TOMEAN MIGHT HAVE MADE SOME EXPLANATION TO BONGO WHICH IN EFFECT EXONERATED GABON DOES MAKE SOME SENSE, SINCE GOG HAS BEEN RUMORED AS BEING ONE OF ALLEGED CULPRITS AND STP MAY HAVE THOUGHT DESIRABLE TO LAY THAT PARTICULAR GHOST.

5. FOR ADDIS ABABA: IF ASST OAU SEC GEN PETER ONU EVER MADE HIS FACT-FINDING TRIP TO SAO TOME, WE WOULD BE INTERESTED IN HEARING RESULT. TIENKEN

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